

Dental Firsts

World's first woman dental school graduate was Lucy Beaman Hobbs Taylor, born in Franklin County, New York in 1833. After working as a schoolteacher, she applied to the Ohio College of Dental Surgery in 1861. The school rejected her because she was a woman. Undaunted, she studied on her own, apprenticed to others and eventually opened her own practice. The college eventually admitted her, and she completed her degree in just four months. She later married James Myrtle Taylor, taught him dentistry and went into practice with him.

World's first dental college was the Baltimore College of Dental Surgery, which opened with five students on November 3, 1840. The school is still in session as part of the University of Maryland.

World's first electric dental drill was patented by George F. Green of Kalamazoo, Michigan, in 1875. Manual drilling devices existed before this time, including one used by George Washington's dentist, John Greenwood. Dr. Greenwood adapted his mother's foot-treadle spinning wheel and invented the first known "dental foot engine" in 1790.

World's first successful artificial heart transplant recipient was retired dentist Dr. Barney Clark, who lived 112 days with the Jarvik artificial heart in 1982. Interestingly, a retired dentist named Philip Blaiberg received the world's second successful heart transplant, in 1968.

America's first patent for false teeth was received by Charles Graham in 1822 of New York.

Cotton candy

The spun-sugar confection and the device that made it were invented in 1897 by Dr. William Morrison, a dentist, and John C. Wharton. Their device heated sugar in a spinning bowl that had tiny holes in it. The Nashville, Tennessee inventors called their treat "Fairy Floss." They introduced it to the world at the St. Louis World's Fair in 1904.

Anesthesia

Dr. Horace Wells was a dentist in Hartford, Connecticut, when he stumbled upon the use of nitrous oxide - "laughing gas" - as medicine's first anesthetic in 1844. After Dr. Wells saw a public demonstration of the gas, which was featured for people's amusement at a traveling show, he became convinced of its medical possibilities. Shortly afterwards, Dr. Wells had himself put under and asked a colleague to extract one of his molars. When he awakened, Dr. Wells said, "I didn't feel it so much as the prick of a pin. A new era in tooth-pulling has arrived!"

World's first discovery of bacteria was made by Dutch scientist Antony van Leeuwenhoek, who found the microscopic creatures when he examined plaque from his teeth.

